

Reflections on a Nest that was Blown Away...

It was the chirping that first got my attention.

These were sharp, high pitch intermittent calls coming from the Bougainvillea tree on the balcony outside my office. Over time, the frequency of the chirping increased. It did not take long for me to discover its source - two olive-backed sunbirds.



The nest just before the storm.

These slender and elegant birds with long thin bills would fly to the Bougainvillea tree, hover over the flowers, dart from branch to branch, chirp and then fly off - only to return soon again. It was only when I noticed that one of the sunbirds held a thin sliver of raffia in its beak that the reason for their frequent visits became clear - they were building a nest on the bougainvillea tree.

Over the next few days, I saw the wisps of plant fibre, dried leaves, raffia and other light materials brought to the tree take form and shape as the sunbirds built their nest. What surprised me was the sheer determination and energy that the sunbirds demonstrated in building their nest. At any time during the day

when I happened to be in my office, I would hear their chirps every half hour or so, and know that they were hard at work adding some new material to their nest.

But I never got the chance to see the completed nest. After a heavy rain one afternoon, the half formed nest was found limp and wet on the floor. Perhaps the nest was not attached securely to the branch or the weight of the rain on the nest was too much for the branch to hold or the wind was too strong. Whatever the reason, weeks of hard work had come to naught.

This episode brings to mind Jesus' parable about building a house. Build it on a solid foundation of rock, He says, not sand. In Matthew 7:24-25, Jesus spoke about "a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock."

What is this foundation of rock that Jesus is referring to?

Matthew 7:24 makes it clear: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." Jesus is making a distinction between just knowing and actually doing what He taught. Building a house on solid rock is about living one's values and principles in life rather than merely hearing and knowing about them.

James 1:22 says it plainly - "Do not merely listen to the word,... Do what it says."

The consequence of not having a solid foundation is dire. In the same parable, Jesus spoke of the "foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash" (Matt 7:26-27).

As our nation celebrates its 50th Year of Independence, it is an opportune time to reflect on the foundation we have built in our families, schools and indeed our nation. We need to continue to

strengthen these foundations in order to stand resolute, strong and united when we face any storm that may come our way.



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